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ABSTRACT

Two nationwide surveys of college educational programmers and older adults (over 60 years of age) were conducted during 1982. The first survey polled 249 educational programmers to determine the current status of older adult educational activities in terms of the institutions' demographics, funding sources, and programmer expectations of expansion or contraction of services in the near future. The second survey polled both educational programmers and older adult students (all former participants) as to the programmers' expectations and the older persons' motivations for participation in educational experiences in later life. The first study showed that educational programmers regard seniors, in terms of future growth, as an interested but fairly static market for their programs. The second survey showed a lack of congruence between the expectations of educational programmers and the motivations of the senior adults regarding selection of their educational experiences. Much of this lack of congruence involved differing expectations and motivations by the educational programmers and senior adults with regard to need- and want-oriented course offerings. Though the older adults displayed high levels of interest in the "need" courses, their interest was not as consistent as the programmers' and declined rapidly. Educational programmers tended to be more need-oriented in their course offerings, while older adults chose more want-oriented courses. The results of the study should assist programmers in making their offerings more consistent with older adults' motivations and may cause them to look to the older adult market as one source of revenue to help keep their institutions afloat. (KC)

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CONTINUING EDUCATION AND AGING:

WHAT'S GOING ON?

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

A Research Brief for the Western
Gerontological Society, 29th Annual Meeting,
Albuquerque, New Mexico: April 18, 1983

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CONTINUING EDUCATION AND AGING

WHAT'S GOING ON? WHERE ARE WE GOING?

ABSTRACT

This article describes two nationwide surveys of educational programmers and older adults (over sixty years of age) conducted during 1982.

The first survey polled 249 educational programmers to determine the current status of older adult educational activity in terms of the institutions' demographics, funding sources, and programmers' expectations of expansion or contraction of services in the near future.

The second survey polled both educational programmers and older adult students (all former ELDERHOSTEL participants) as to the former's expectations of and the latter's motivations for participation in educational experiences in later life.

The results of both studies are discussed and compared to each other in terms of current practices and future directions.

Survey data and a selective bibliography are provided.

CONTINUING EDUCATION AND AGING: WHAT'S GOING ON? WHERE ARE WE GOING?

In the past ten years, participation in educational programs for individuals sixty years of age and over has been increasing at a rate that has attracted attention and developed interest from institutions of higher education and cohort organizations throughout the United States (Conter and Schneiderman, 1982a). The well publicized successes of programs such as ELDERHOSTEL (Teneobaum, 1979), Kentucky's New School (DeCrow, 1974), Southern California's Andrus Center (Peterson, 1979), Arizona's Challenges of Maturity (Conter and Golden, 1979) and Wisconsin's Traveling Teachers (Wile, Fischer and Kaplan, 1979) and School for Seniors (Wile and Fleury, 1980) point the way to the emergence of a "golden age" of continuing education for "golden agers".

Recognition of the tremendous educational potential of this relatively underserved demographic group (Cross and Florio, 1978) as a market for a portion of higher education's currently "unused capacity" (Bowen, 1980) has led to attempts to better understand both the clientele and the existent mechanisms that provide educational alternatives to the older adult. This research brief describes two separate but related pilot survey studies that addressed the dual questions of "What's Happening?" and "Where Are We Going?" in the area of Continuing Education and aging.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

The first study developed from an effort to determine the status of existing practices and future expectations of educational programmers who provide educational offerings to the older learner (Conter and Schneiderman, 1982b). In an attempt to learn more about educational programming for senior adults, in January of 1982 a nationwide survey was distributed

to institutions of higher education. It's purpose was to determine the current status of educational programming for older adults, institutional demographics which might impact upon current and future programming decisions, types of funding sources used and programmer expectations as to the future expansion or contraction of educational programming for this cliente group. Each is discussed below.

The population surveyed included administrators of four major educational systems serving the older population: Institutional Representatives of the National University Continuing Education Association (NUCEA), State Directors of ELDERHOSTEL, State Coordinators of the Foreign Policy Association's GREAT DECISIONS program and member institutions of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC). A five per cent sample was sought with a minimum of four responses (one from each category) from states with eighty or fewer institutions of higher education and a proportionately larger sample from the more populous states. An effort was made to make the sample representative of both geographic distribution and demographic characteristics of each state. Two hundred and forty-nine surveys were mailed. One hundred and ninety usable surveys were returned (76.31%). These were tabulated according to respondent category and geographic location.

Institutional Demographics

Of the one hundred and ninety usable survey responses, forty-nine (25.78%) were returned by two-year institutions. One hundred and forty (73.68%) were returned by public institutions. Geographic response was fairly consistent with the survey sample with each state being represented by at least two responses and the majority of the states represented by three or more responses (figure 1).

Current Status of Programming

Responding to questions dealing with current practices, programmers reported that the vast majority (72.5%) of programming for older adults is non-credit. Especially significant in this regard were the ELDERHOSTEL and GREAT DECISIONS programs with non-credit responses of 98.75% and 82.25% respectively. Even when elders enrolled in regular credit course offerings, only 58% did so for academic credit.

Funding Strategies Reported

As with many continuing education activities, the majority of senior programming reported (54%) was required to be self-supporting. A significant percentage (28%) was funded by the institutions themselves. A surprisingly small number (7%) of senior offerings were grant or endowment supported. Tax-base support comprised the remaining 11% of the funding sources.

Related to the question of funding sources was the relative importance of the financial integrity of senior programs to the institutions. Eighty-seven percent of the institutions reporting indicated that they would continue to offer programs for elders if these programs either were able to break even or required only a small subsidy. The other two choices of "make money" and "lose a large amount" were approximately equal with 6% and 7% respectively.

Value of Senior Programs

Senior programming at the responding institutions is primarily seen as either a public service activity (64%) or a part of the regular curriculum (33%). Only one of the institutions surveyed reported research as a primary function of senior programs. Almost 93% of the respondents

indicated that senior programs were worth the time, money and effort necessary to develop, offer and coordinate them.

Future Expectations

Although respondents seemed quite positive toward the concept of older adult education, they did not see these senior programs as a "growth industry" within continuing education. Eighty-five percent of the institutions responding projected either no change (33.5%) or only a slight increase (51.75%) in the number of programs to be offered in the near future. It appears that programmers are committed to the concept of elder education, but not convinced of its growth potential.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

The second study discussed evolved from the findings of the programmer survey as an effort to learn more about the program participants. The study sought to examine the congruence of educational programmer expectations and the motivations of the older adult (over sixty years of age), for the seniors to pursue educational experiences in later life. The major purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship existed between what the educational programmers perceived of as the motivations of the older adults and the self-reported choices of this same group (Conter, 1983).

A second purpose of this study was, in some measure, to provide educational programmers with information that would be useful to their institutions in planning and operating educational offerings for this age group of potential students. Such information might assist the educational programmer in developing a strategy to assure that the programmer and the older participant were atuned to each other's respective

capabilities and interests.

The instrument used in the survey was developed as a hybrid of Bova's (1981) and Covey's (1982) studies of the older adults' participation in higher education. The questionnaire consisted of twenty randomly arranged course offerings from the 1981 SUMMER and the 1981/82 WINTER/SPRING ELDERHOSTEL catalogs. Programmers and participants were requested to rank twenty courses in order of preference expected to conform to student or personal choices respectively. Selections were assigned a weighted average value based upon Harris and Associates 1981 "Concerns of Senior Adults" poll (Need Values) and a composite developed by the author of "Stated Motivations and Subject Matter Desired by Older Adults Participating in Education" (Want Values).

The two survey samples of the study again consisted of 249 (approximately five percent of the total) institutions of higher education in the United States and an equal number of former ELDERHOSTEL participants, similarly geographically and demographically located. Again, in states with large numbers of institutions, a five percent sample was drawn. The programmer sample was selected to replicate the earlier 1982 survey. The study analyzed 193 (77.51%) usable returns from institutions of higher education and from 208 (83.53%) former ELDERHOSTEL participants. Again, geographic distribution of the responses were consistent both with the survey sample and the earlier survey. (Figure 2 and 3)

Upon receipt, the respondent surveys were identified by postmark and recorded by state of origin in either programmer or participant categories. Surveys were then assigned need and want values based upon the first ten courses selected by the respondent. For each survey, the score assigned was based upon the number of courses selected in each category

and the value (+/-) of the courses selected. Individual survey scores were then recorded on a state profile sheet by respondent category and according to need, want and composite which totaled the number and value of courses selected. (Sample state profile sheet reproduced below).

STATE	Arkansas		Sample Size 4	
	Programmer	Need	Want	Composite
(ELDER)	1.	- 6 / -26	+ 4 /+ 32.5	- 2 / + 0.65
(G. D.)	2.	- 4 / -22	+ 6 /+ 27	+ 2 / + 0.50
(AACJC)	3.	- 2 / -11	+ 8 /+ 36	+ 6 / + 2.50
(NUCEA)	4.	- 4 / -16	+ 6 /+ 43	+ 2 / + 2.70
Total		-16 / -55	+24 /+138.5	+ 8 / + 6.35
Average		- 4 / -13.75	+ 6 /+ 34.525	+ 2 / + 1.5875
	Participant			
	1.	- 4 / -23	+ 6 /+ 30	+ 2 / + 0.70
	2.	- 3 / -11	+ 7 /+ 37	+ 4 / + 2.60
	3.	- 1 / - 7	+ 9 /+ 50	+ 8 / + 4.30
	4.	- 4 / -30	+ 6 /+ 36	+ 2 / + 0.60
Total		-12 / -71	+28 /+153	+16 / + 8.20
Average		- 3 / -17.75	+ 7 /+38.25	+ 4 / + 2.05

As participant and programmer categories were completed for each state, a state profile was developed for each of the three categories (need, want, and composite) based upon an average developed from totaling the number and value responses in each category and dividing the totals by the number of responses. These figures were than recorded in a series of cross partition tables. (Sample cross partition table for the above example is repro-

duced below).

	NEED # / Value	WANT # / Value	COMPOSITE # / Value
PROGRAMMER	- 4.0000 / -13.750	+ 6.0000 / + 36.6250	+ 2.0000 / +1.5875
PARTICIPANT	- 3.00 / -17.75	+ 7.00 / +38.25	+ 4.0000 / +2.0500

Non-usable responses were not included in totals nor as denominators to develop the state profiles.

State profiles were compared by participant and programmer categories and by participant and individual programmer group categories. Additionally, programmer group categories were compared to each other. Later, the top ten states numerically in each category were isolated for comparison between need choices, want choices and between programmer and participant groups. States were then ranked according to programmer expectations versus actual participant responses and categorized as "liberal" (if want selections were predominent), "accurate" (if no clear tendency was demonstrated), or "conservative" (if need values were predominant). Finally, states were ranked by participant responses as "liberal", "neutral", or "conservative" and plotted geographically and demographically on United States maps.

Conclusions Of The Programmer/Participant Study

Analysis of the data developed by the study lead to the following conclusions regarding educational programmer expectations of and the reported motivations of senior adults to participate in higher education ex-

periences in their later years:

1. There appeared to be a lack of congruence in the study sample surveyed between the expectations of educational programmers and the motivations of the senior adults regarding selection of the education experiences listed.

2. Much of this lack of congruence involved differing expectations and motivations by the educational programmers and the senior adults respectively with regard to preferences for "need" and "want" oriented course offerings.

3. Although, in some instances, both educational programmers and older adults displayed relatively congruent high levels of interest in "need" oriented courses, the older adult interest was not as consistent as the programmers and declined much more rapidly.

4. Both educational programmers and senior adult participants display high congruence in terms of number and types of courses selected within their own programmer of participant categories.

5. Educational programmers tended to be more "conservative", (i.e., need--oriented) in their course selections than the senior adult participants.

6. Geographic and demographic locations of the study sample seemed to have had an effect upon selection of courses.

Implications of the Programmer/Participant Study

The results of this study have several implications that relate directly to not only "Where We're Going", but to "How We Get There". First, consideration of the results of the study will cause some educa-

tional programmers to examine some of their assumptions regarding the motivations of the older learner.

While a significant population of the study participant respondents did express need-oriented motivations, the majority of the respondents were motivated by what Covey (1982) referred to as "self-oriented" (i.e., want-oriented) courses. DeCrow in his 1974 study indicated that agency orientation was often reflected as biases in the type of course offerings provided by the agency. Recognition of the lack of congruence disclosed by the study in certain programmer categories may assist specific educational institutions or groups in redefining their programming philosophies.

Second, consideration of the results of the study will cause some educational programmers to re-examine existing strategies and develop new strategies for the development of programs for older adults.

Examination of the orientation displayed by older learners in specific geographic locations and demographic situations may cause programmers to reconsider their own past experiences and current strategies in dealing with this group. The concept of participant neutrality (i.e., no predominent selections) as a factor in some programming successes may help to partially explain some previously contradictory program results. Even if no seemingly significant strategic changes results of the study, the examination will serve to focus much needed attention upon the efforts of the programmers and their institutions.

Third, consideration of the results of the study will cause some educational programmers to give more attention to the senior market as a factor that may contribute to institutional survival.

Although no one seriously believes that capitalizing upon the senior market is the total answer to higher education's current declining enroll-

ment situation, this group can assist institutions in developing more aggressive, market-oriented student recruitment strategies. Lessons learned in dealing with this one specific clientele, may be transferable to other similar or related groups or situations. A second, as yet unmeasured, benefit may be increased political support from a population segment that more closely identifies higher education's efforts and activities with its interests.

Fourth, consideration of the results of the study will cause some educational programmers as well as some older learners to more actively seek interaction with their counterparts toward the mutual benefit of both groups.

The study has shown that, given the opportunity to provide input regarding educational desires and motivations, the older learner is more than willing. Recognizing the rapid growth of the total population in this age group, their demonstrated support for and patronage of institutions meeting their needs and the likelihood that increasing emphasis upon and support for the results of this interaction will continue, it seems beneficial for both educators and participants to seek greater understanding of and interaction with their opposite numbers to build a truly symbiotic relationship.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

Both the educational programmer and the programmer/participant studies point to a need for further research in the area of elder education. In both surveys, high response rates and the comprehensiveness of the information received indicate a high level of interest on the part of both programmers and participants. Both studies point to an opportunity for a

mutually beneficial melding of the interest of both groups. Perhaps most significant, however, is the discrepancy displayed in the latter study between the assumptions of programmers and the activities of participants in terms of educational activity. If the relationship between the groups is to become truly symbiotic, greater emphasis must be placed upon continuous, open interaction between the parties involved.

FIGURE 1

INSTITUTIONS SURVEYED BY REGION

REGION AND STATE	TOTAL POPULATION (1) (N)				SAMPLE SURVEYED (n)				SAMPLE RESPONSE (nr)			
	2 Yr	4 Yr	Public	Private	2 Yr	4 Yr	Public	Private	2 Yr	4 Yr	Public	Private
REGION 1												
Arkansas	15	20	19	16	1	3	4	-0-	1	3	4	-0-
Louisiana	7	25	20	12	1	3	3	1	-0-	2	2	-0-
Oklahoma	19	25	14	29	1	3	3	1	-0-	3	2	1
Texas	65	91	98	58	4	4	5	3	2	3	2	3
REGION 2												
Iowa	23	37	21	39	1	3	3	1	1	2	2	1
Kansas	24	28	29	23	1	3	3	1	1	3	3	1
Minnesota	28	42	30	40	1	3	3	1	1	3	3	1
Missouri	22	67	28	61	2	4	6	-0-	2	2	4	-0-
Nebraska	11	20	16	15	1	3	3	1	1	1	3	1
North Dakota	7	10	11	6	1	3	4	-0-	1	3	4	-0-
South Dakota	4	16	8	12	1	3	2	2	1	3	2	2
REGION 3												
Connecticut	21	26	24	23	1	3	4	-0-	1	1	2	-0-
Maine	9	20	12	17	1	3	1	3	1	1	1	1
Massachusetts	38	80	32	86	2	4	2	4	2	4	2	4
New Hampshire	12	14	11	15	1	3	1	3	-0-	3	2	1
Rhode Island	2	11	3	10	1	3	3	1	-0-	3	2	1
Vermont	3	18	6	15	1	3	3	1	1	2	2	1
REGION 4												
Arizona	17	11	19	9	2	2	4	-0-	-0-	2	2	-0-
Colorado	17	28	27	18	2	2	3	1	1	2	2	1
Idaho	3	6	6	3	1	3	2	2	-0-	2	1	1
Montana	6	10	9	7	1	3	4	-0-	1	3	4	-0-
New Mexico	10	9	16	3	1	3	3	1	1	3	3	1
Nevada	4	3	6	1	1	3	4	-0-	-0-	2	2	-0-
Utah	7	7	9	5	1	3	1	3	-0-	3	1	2
Wyoming	8	1	8	1	1	3	4	-0-	-0-	3	3	-0-
REGION 5												
Alaska	9	6	12	3	2	2	3	1	2	2	3	1
California	119	153	136	136	6	10	12	4	3	8	9	2
Hawaii	6	6	9	3	1	3	4	-0-	1	3	4	-0-
Oregon	16	29	21	24	1	3	2	2	-0-	1	1	-0-
Washington	28	22	33	17	1	3	4	-0-	1	3	4	-0-
REGION 6												
New Jersey	21	40	31	30	2	2	4	-0-	1	3	4	-0-
New York	86	208	86	208	4	11	8	7	3	7	4	6
Pennsylvania	70	132	61	141	3	6	6	3	2	5	5	2
REGION 7												
Delaware	3	5	5	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
District of Columbia	-0-	19	1	18	-0-	3	-0-	3	-0-	3	-0-	3
Florida	37	44	37	44	1	3	3	1	-0-	2	1	1
Georgia	31	47	34	44	2	2	4	-0-	1	-0-	1	-0-
Maryland	22	34	32	24	1	3	3	1	1	3	3	1
North Carolina	77	50	74	53	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	1
South Carolina	29	31	33	27	1	3	4	-0-	-0-	2	2	-0-
Virginia	26	43	39	30	1	3	4	-0-	-0-	2	2	-0-
West Virginia	8	20	16	12	1	3	4	-0-	-0-	3	3	-0-
REGION 8												
Alabama	28	31	37	22	1	3	3	1	-0-	3	2	1
Kentucky	27	30	21	36	1	3	3	1	1	3	3	1
Mississippi	22	19	25	16	1	3	3	1	1	3	3	1
Tennessee	29	50	24	55	2	2	4	-0-	2	2	4	-0-
REGION 9												
Illinois	62	96	63	95	3	5	5	3	3	3	4	2
Indiana	24	50	28	46	1	3	4	-0-	-0-	3	3	-0-
Michigan	35	56	44	47	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1
Ohio	56	80	59	77	4	3	5	2	2	3	4	1
Wisconsin	21	43	30	34	1	3	3	1	1	2	2	1
TOTALS	1275	1978	1498	1755	80	169	182	67	49	141	140	50

FIGURE 2

Survey sample distribution and response rate.

State	Programmer	Response	Participant	Response
Alabama	4	4	4	3
Alaska	4	3	4	1
Arizona	4	4	4	4
Arkansas	4	4	4	4
California	16	15	16	16
Colorado	4	3	4	4
Connecticut	4	3	4	4
Delaware	4	4	4	2
District of Columbia	3	2	3	3
Florida	4	3	4	4
Georgia	4	3	4	4
Hawaii	4	3	4	3
Idaho	4	3	4	4
Illinois	8	6	8	8
Indiana	4	2	4	3
Iowa	4	3	4	4
Kansas	4	2	4	4
Kentucky	4	4	4	4
Louisiana	4	3	4	1
Maine	4	3	4	2
Maryland	4	2	4	4
Massachusetts	6	4	6	3
Michigan	5	2	5	5
Minnesota	4	2	4	4
Mississippi	4	4	4	3
Missouri	6	5	6	6
Montana	4	4	4	3
Nebraska	4	4	4	3
Nevada	4	3	4	4
New Hampshire	4	4	4	2
New Jersey	4	2	4	4
New Mexico	4	2	4	4
New York	15	9	15	15
North Carolina	6	4	6	2
North Dakota	4	3	4	
Ohio	7	4	7	7
Oklahoma	4	3	4	3
Oregon	4	4	4	4
Pennsylvania	9	8	9	9
Rhode Island	4	3	4	1
South Carolina	4	4	4	1
South Dakota	4	3	4	1
Tennessee	4	4	4	1
Texas	8	6	8	8
Utah	4	3	4	4
Vermont	4	4	4	4
Virginia	4	4	4	1
Washington	4	4	4	4
West Virginia	4	2	4	4
Wisconsin	4	3	4	4
Wyoming	4	4	4	4
TOTAL	249	193	249	208

FIGURE 3

Programmer distribution by state (sample/response).

State	A.A.C.J.C.	ELDERHOSTEL	Great Decisions	N.U.C.E.A.	Total
Alabama	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
Alaska	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/0	4/3
Arizona	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
Arkansas	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
California	6/6	2/2	2/1	6/6	16/15
Colorado	1/1	1/1	1/0	1/1	4/3
Connecticut	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/0	4/3
Delaware	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
District of C.	0	1/1	1/0	1/1	3/2
Florida	1/0	1/1	1/0	1/1	4/2
Georgia	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/0	4/3
Hawaii	1/1	1/1	1/0	1/1	4/3
Idaho	1/0	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/3
Illinois	2/2	2/1	2/1	2/2	8/6
Indiana	1/0	1/1	1/0	1/1	4/2
Iowa	1/1	1/1	1/0	1/1	4/3
Kansas	1/1	1/1	1/0	1/0	4/2
Kentucky	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
Louisiana	1/1	1/1	1/0	1/1	4/3
Maine	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/0	4/3
Maryland	1/0	1/1	1/0	1/1	4/2
Massachusetts	2/2	1/1	1/1	2/0	6/4
Michigan	2/0	1/1	1/0	1/1	5/2
Minnesota	1/1	1/1	1/0	1/0	4/2
Mississippi	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
Missouri	2/2	1/1	1/1	2/1	6/5
Montana	1/1	1/1	1/0	1/1	4/3
Nebraska	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
Nevada	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
New Hampshire	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
New Jersey	1/1	1/1	1/0	1/0	4/2
New Mexico	1/0	1/1	1/0	1/1	4/2
New York	4/3	4/3	2/2	5/1	15/9
North Carolina	2/1	1/1	1/1	2/1	6/4
North Dakota	1/1	1/0	1/1	1/1	4/3
Ohio	2/2	2/1	1/0	2/1	7/4
Oklahoma	1/1	1/1	1/0	1/1	4/3
Oregon	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
Pennsylvania	4/3	1/1	1/1	3/3	9/8
Rhode Island	1/0	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/3
S. Carolina	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
S. Dakota	1/1	1/1	1/0	1/1	4/3
Tennessee	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
Texas	3/1	1/1	1/1	3/2	8/6
Utah	1/1	1/1	1/0	1/1	4/3
Vermont	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
Virginia	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
Washington	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
West Virginia	1/1	1/1	1/0	1/0	4/2
Wisconsin	1/1	1/1	1/0	1/1	4/3
Wyoming	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	4/4
TOTALS	69/57	57/33	54/33	69/50	249/193

RESOURCES

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